

Siuslaw News
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Opinion

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE
 For Siuslaw News

Nin Sharyn Bebeau



PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

“When you find peace within yourself, only then will you create peace in the world.”

That saying sums up the work and philosophy of Nin Bebeau, an artist, psychologist, author, teacher, lecturer and relative newcomer to Florence who dedicated her life to travelling the globe as a peace ambassador before relocating here from her native New York last year.

“A very wise teacher once told me that to make a difference in this world, you must first make a difference in your own life,” she said. “Then you can expand it to your community and wider horizons.”

While Bebeau has followed a diverse path of artistic, academic and diplomatic pursuits around the world, her unwavering compass has always remained focused on peace.

“I vowed as a young woman to live my life without experiencing war,” she said. “That morphed into doing whatever I could to prevent it.”

But Bebeau would have to stare at war in the face before developing her vision to promote peace.

Born in a snowstorm and raised in Brooklyn by Holocaust survivors, Bebeau recalls how the loss of family members at a concentration camp

cast a shadow on her early life. Like the young girl featured in the novel “A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,” she grew up in Williamsburg, a dangerous neighborhood overrun with hatred and violence during the civil rights era. Bebeau turned away from that dark world and to books instead, becoming a voracious reader and digesting advanced psychology tomes at age 10.

“Instead of fighting the powers that be, I wanted to be the change I wished to see in the world,” she said.

Bebeau set out to follow Gandhi’s advice at an early age. By 17, she had joined a civil rights group — her first step toward a lifetime of promoting peace.

Then came marriage and parenting and an unforgettable trip to Israel that forever changed her life. Bebeau arrived just two days before the Six Day War, a paradigm she had sworn to avoid at all costs. Now she found herself immersed in it, living and working on a kibbutz a mile from the Syrian border while her husband fought on the front lines.

“We believed we were creating a world with freedom for all,” she said. “We wanted to support that idealism for equality.”

Shortly after the war, the couple moved to San Francisco where Bebeau worked the switchboard of a Haight-Ashbury crisis center. Under the tutelage of inspiring mentors, she created peace “one person at a time” by developing a successful job pro-

World peace ambassador Nin Sharyn Bebeau views Florence as “a mecca for helping people.”

gram helping people get back on their feet. She also became a self-taught woodworker, selling her crafts at the Embarcadero and Fisherman’s Wharf.

“It was a fantastic time,” she said. “We believed that anything was possible and that love would save the world.”

Bebeau moved to Boulder, Colo., where she established a supportive community for single moms after her marriage dissolved. There, her life and work would blossom. After attaining master’s degrees in transpersonal psychology, she worked as a teacher and therapist specializing in archetypal life coaching

with her second husband, psychologist Charles Bebeau, Ph.D.

“Within two years, I got married, had two children, wrote two theses, acquired two master’s degrees, founded a graduate school and authored a book,” she said. “I never slept.”

Over the course of 30 years, the couple established four graduate-level institutes for transpersonal psychology, developed curriculum, taught classes, facilitated groups, co-authored books and provided psychotherapy services. They also lectured on nearly every continent for several global peace organizations.

“It was extraordinary to connect with people of various religions, races and social classes around the world,” she said. “Despite our differences, we were all dedicated to creating peace, understanding and unconditional acceptance. It isn’t a process I try to do but a state I exist in.”

Bebeau also started a peace movement involving women of all faiths and nationalities through United Nations forums and international conferences. In 2007, she went on a peace tour to the Middle East with military generals and Native American leaders and, on her way through Europe, Bebeau passed an exit sign to Dachau, where her family members had been killed.

“I suddenly understood that even though I cannot go back in time to save my siblings, I work for peace so no more little children will die,” she said.

After her husband passed away in 2008, Bebeau returned to New York until moving to Florence in October 2015.

“Florence is a mecca of creativity and for helping people,” she said. “It’s an honor and privilege to live here.”

Bebeau now dedicates her time to writing, volunteering for local charities such as SOS and hosting a show called “Tomorrow’s Child” at KXCR Community Radio. She is also working on her first novel.

With the current climate of political divisiveness, terrorism, violence, hatred, war and even climate change itself, Bebeau shares her philosophy for achieving peace.

“Together, we can be heroes,” she said. “Each of us must clarify our values, stand for what we believe and speak our truth. We can open our hearts to recognize how significant every life is, letting the light of justice shine through us for the betterment of all members of our community and society. That way we can carry the torch of freedom, equality and peace to illuminate and inspire others around the world.”

Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning journalist, author and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. Email CJReditor@gmail.com.

LETTERS

Good Samaritan

A big thank you to whomever found and turned my ring in at the Fred Meyer store here in Florence. The ring was left to me by my best friend of 50 years after she passed away.

Thank you again!

*Betty Scarborough
 Florence*

Sorry for rude remarks

In response to Donna Dobson’s letter (Dec. 7), I am sorry for the man’s rude remarks to you. I am also sorry for my own rude remarks over the past several months during what was the most contentious campaign I can remember in my 66 years.

Emotions on both sides have been very strong. Like you, I have had people respond rudely to me.

After some pretty intense experiences on Facebook, I have decided to just let it all go because, really, it isn’t me; it’s the fact that I don’t agree with them.

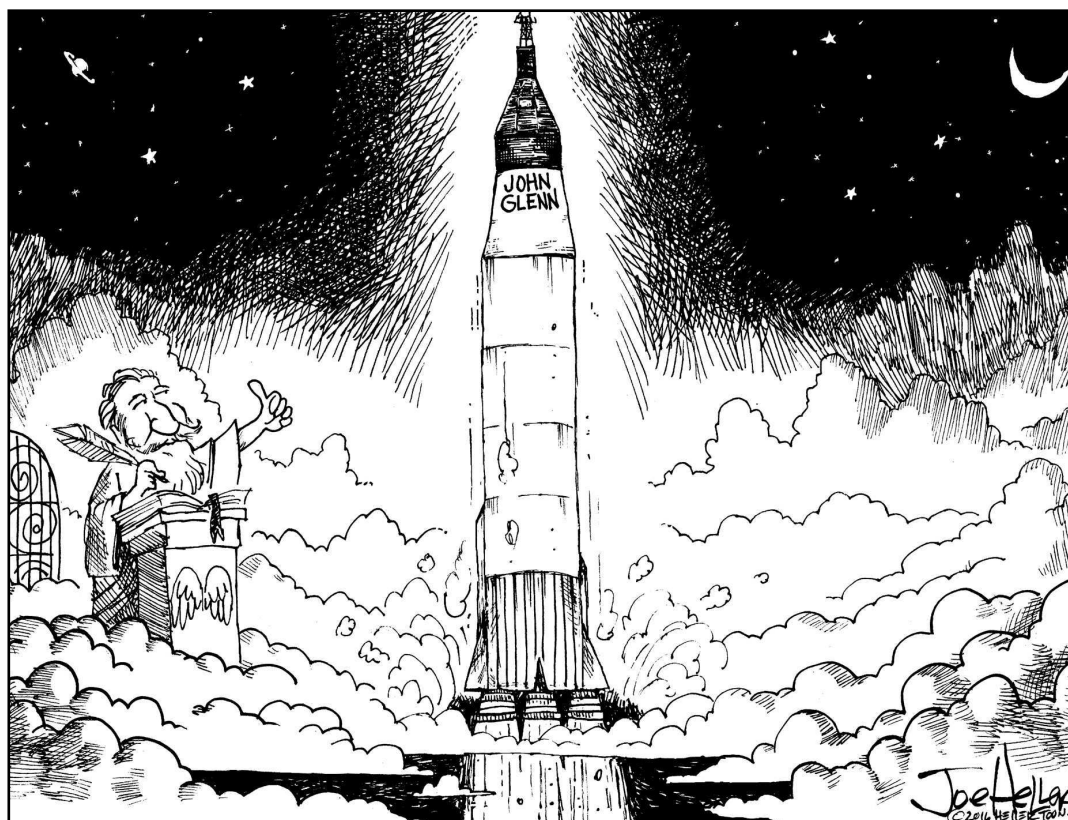
Some people don’t like to hear “let’s agree to disagree...”

That being said, an awful lot of people voted for Secretary Clinton. At last count, she received over 2.6 million more votes than Trump and they aren’t finished recounting.

Those of us who voted for Hillary did so because she was the complete opposite of Trump. I’m not going to list her points because after this very ugly campaign season, we know what her platform was.

However, I’m a bit confused about President-elect Trump’s platform. I know he said he wants to build a wall between America and Mexico and send all the “illegals” home.

I know he is against Syrians coming to America and has essentially declared war on Muslims. I know he has been accused of being a sexual predator and I feel he promoted violence and bigotry during the campaign.



I know he wants to make business pay big time with what I believe is a 35 percent tax for moving overseas — and yet he manufactures many of his own products overseas.

He said he wants to unite the country, to identify with middle class and poor Americans, yet many of those who have been appointed to his cabinet are millionaires and billionaires.

He appointed Oklahoma’s Attorney General to head up the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) even though he has close ties to the fossil fuel industry — something that seems like a conflict of interest.

General Flynn has retweeted a fake news post about Hillary Clinton being connected with a child sex slave ring at a pizza parlor, prompting a man with an AR-15 to “self investigate” the

pizza parlor and shoot into the business while families were inside.

To be honest, Donald Trump frightens many of us but I agree that it doesn’t give any of us the right to be rude to each other despite the rudeness Trump himself has displayed at times.

In the four years ahead, he’s going to need to develop a thick skin. Saturday Night Live will probably satirize him the same as other presidents.

For everyone’s sake, I hope he is successful, but I think his vision for the country is different than the majority of voters in America. His posturing towards North Korea and fondness of Putin concern me.

I can’t imagine how different this country will be in four years, but we’ll just have to wait

and see if it’s for the better or worse.

*Gail Katz Hanson
 Florence*

Health care corporate money pot

After years of promising to do away with President Obama’s Affordable Care Act, Republicans now have their chance. Their attempts will create a different set of winners and losers as big insurance crafts a for-profit business plan that will have little to do with health — and much to do with the corporate bottom line.

Inevitably, the model fails because of the large segments of the population who will be left to fend for themselves.

Insurance corporations’ insistence to keep their hands in the health care money pot will be the downfall of the GOP attempt.

You might be surprised to learn the answer is waiting in the wings in Oregon in 2020. A dedicated array of doctors, nurses, health professionals, business men and women, and thousands of citizens of all ages have been tirelessly organizing for a health care system that serves everyone in Oregon, is equitable, affordable and able to provide high quality universal health care — all while saving millions of dollars by employing a Medicare-for-All (single payer) system.

Please get used to the concept of single-payer and research the success of countries that have employed it for decades. Visit the Health Care for All Oregon website at www.hcao.org and get involved.

When the time comes, we will need every enlightened vote to overcome the vested interests and misleading advertisements authorized by big insurance and their corporate and political allies, like those that helped defeat a similar measure in Colorado this year.

*Stuart Henderson
 Florence*

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